

A letter of April, 1818, proves that in the interval of eight years his studies had been but fitful and intermittent. "I was proposing to travel over the north this summer. There is but one thing to prevent me. I know nothing—I have read nothing—and I mean to follow Solomon's directions, 'Get learning, get understanding.' I find earlier days are gone by—I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge. I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world. Some do it with their society, some with their wit, some with their benevolence, some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good-humor on all they meet, and, in a thousand ways, all dutiful to the command of great Nature. There is, but one way for me. The road lies through application, study and thought. I will pursue it; and for that end purpose retiring for some years."

Returning to the last days of his school life, we find that as a reward of his diligence he captured the first prizes in the last two or three successive half years. A love of music developed, too, about this time, and Keats in after years when reading to Clarke these MS. lines of the *Eve* of St. Agnes:

The boisterous midnight festive clarion,
The kettle drum, and far heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, tho' but in dying tone,
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone."

"That line," said Keats, "came into my head when I remembered how I used to listen in bed to your music at school."

Herr Hoops sums up very well the influences of his school-life in the following paragraph:

"So already in his school years there was awakened in Keats, in addition to a love of Nature, also a devotion to classical antiquities, and especially to classical mythology, which afterwards appears so closely bound up with the love of Nature in his poems. His own gifts led him in that direction. He had not the philosophical temperament of Wordsworth and Shelley, for whom Nature and its relation to man was an object of philosophical speculation; he regarded her more with the imagination of the painter, of the creative artist, and precisely for that reason the nature personifications of Greek mythology corresponded in so high a degree to his own spiritual disposition."

Through an acquaintance with Chapman's Homer, and the influence of Haydon, this love of classical antiquity was intensified and clarified, the first impulse of which we saw originate in the study of Vergil, Tooke, Spenser and Lemprière."

On the death of his mother in 1810 Keats was removed from school and, with his brothers and sister, placed under the care of two guardians, Abbey and Sandell.

The former seems to have undertaken from the first the exclusive control of the children. He selected the profession of medicine as a career for Keats, and bound him apprentice for five years to a surgeon at Edmonton named Hammond.

The old school at Enfield was only some two miles distant, and Keats was able to renew his early friendship with Cowden Clarke. It was there, in a beautiful old artour, that Clarke first read aloud to Keats the *Epithalamion* of Spenser. It was then that Keats first entered into his inheritance. "His features and exclamations were ecstatic. That night he took away with him the first volume of the 'Faery Queene,' and he went through it as a young horse would through a spring meadow, ramping."

"Like a true poet, too, a poet in the grain, he especially singled out epithets, for that felicity and power in which Spenser was so eminent. He hoisted himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said: 'What an image that is—sea-shouldering whales.'"

That was an important day in the life of Keats, for Spenser first woke to life his slumbering genius and remained more or less his poetical master all his life. For this reason his first poem probably, "The Imitation of Spenser," written in 1813—will always remain an interesting fragment for those who are familiar with the poet's development. Leigh Hunt and Milton exercised a marked yet evanescent influence upon the form of his poetry, Shakespeare profoundly influenced his general attitude towards life, but Spenser, in a greater measure far than these, dominated his expression and habit of thought.

Owing to a breach with Hammond, Keats passed to London in order to continue the study of medicine. He was 19 years old when, in the autumn of 1814, he was entered as a student of medicine in St. Thomas' and Guy's Hospitals.

Pertaining to this period, and some, perhaps, of earlier date, are several fugitive pieces of little merit, except that they indicate that the first impulse to poetry had not died out in him.

The verses on "Death" (II. 201) probably belong to the Edmonton period. The sonnets on Byron and Chatterton date from his residence in London, and betray certain poetical influences that were working upon him at the time. The sway of Byron over him was of short duration, but in an epistle to Matthew of the following year Chatterton is received into the heaven of Shakespeare; he dedicates "Endymion" to his memory, and as late as 1819 names him "the purest writer in the English language."

Keats' early attraction to the opinions of Leigh Hunt has been noticed in connection with his school-boy days, when the creed of the Examiner was all the politics he absorbed. Cowden Clarke relates how, when on his return from a visit to Hunt, then just released from prison, he met Keats, who, turning, accompanied him back part of the way. "At the last field-gate, when taking leave, he gave me the sonnet entitled 'Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison.' This I feel to be the first proof I received of his having committed himself in verse; and how clearly do I recall the conscious look and hesitation with which he offered it."

This sonnet, and his subsequent connection with Hunt will, in a large measure, explain the violence which the critics displayed towards him. The *Ode to Apollo* (February, 1815) shows some advance in poetic power, and the *Hymn to Apollo*, despite some errors in taste, contains a few ideas.

All the poems of this period betray 18th century influence, but above all the stanzas to *Hope* with its stiff array of personified abstractions. About this time, that is to say in the spring of 1815, Cowden Clarke came to live in London. The old friendship was again renewed, and their intellectual relations established on a firmer basis.

One of the first books they attacked was a borrowed folio copy of Chapman's Homer. They did not separate that night until the small hours, when Keats left him to trudge the two miles home to the borough. When Clarke came down to breakfast the next morning about ten o'clock he found on the table a letter from Keats containing one of the finest sonnets ever written.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Meanwhile he was attending lectures with commendable regularity, but with less commendable attentiveness to the subjects of the lecture. To Clarke he said, in proof of his inability to sympathize with the science of anatomy as a main purpose in life: "The other day, for instance, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland."

Despite his poetic abstraction he passed his licentiate examination on the 25th July, 1816, and even performed some skilful operations in his capacity as dresser. His confession later to Brown is significant: "My last operation was the opening of a man's temporal artery. I performed it with the utmost elegance; but when I afterwards thought of what was passing through my head the while my skill seemed to me miraculous, and I never touched a lancet again." His release from his guardian and the influence of